

California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley

Overview Report

for the

Water Quality, Supply and Reliability Work Group San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan

I. Introduction

Water is a pressing issue for all Californians. Questions about the source, quantity and quality of water are frequent topics of discussion and debate in numerous forums. As one of the fastest growing regions in California, water quality, supply and reliability are even more pressing concerns for San Joaquin Valley residents. It is imperative that the region work together to ensure adequate water needed to:

- Sustain the Valley's lifestyle;
- Support regional economic growth;
- Retain a world-class agricultural economy;
- Maintain a reliable, high-quality urban water supply; and
- Protect and enhance our local environment.

To create a comprehensive, integrated plan for water resources in the San Joaquin Valley, Congressmen George Radanovich, Dennis Cardoza, Devin Nunes and Jim Costa have initiated the development of the "San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan." The focus of this overview report is on the background, stakeholders, and scope of work of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan, as it potentially represents a unique opportunity to leverage the ongoing efforts of the region's congressional delegation with the additional resources and focus of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley.

II. Background: The Need for the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan

A. SB 1672 – Integrated Regional Water Management Planning - Much of how water in California will be allocated and used in the future will be based upon recently-enacted legislative requirements. A primary reason for creating a region-wide strategy for water is based on SB 1672 (Stat. 2002, ch.767) – Integrated Regional Water Management Planning. This legislation authorizes local public agencies to form regional water management groups and adopt regional plans to address "qualified programs or projects." This bill requires the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and other departments to give preference to "qualified programs or projects" when establishing criteria for funding under various programs.

B. SB 1062 – The California Water Plan - Also required under legislation is the California Water Plan. Enacted by SB 1062 (Stats 1999, ch. 210), the California Water Plan requires the DWR to include in water plan updates various strategies for meeting the state's water supply needs. The update must identify all federal and state permits, approvals or entitlements that may be required in order to implement the strategies. It also establishes an advisory committee to help DWR update the plan.

Considered the primary guiding document for water use in California, a draft of this plan was published in April 2005. It specified that the following actions be taken to ensure a vital economy, healthy environment and high standard of living:

- Use water efficiently.
- Protect water quality.
- Manage water in ways that protect and restore the environment.

The California Water Plan recommends that two initiatives be pursued that incorporate these actions:

- **Initiative 1 - Promote and Practice Integrated Regional Water Management:**
 - Foster regional partnerships
 - Develop and implement integrated regional water management plans
 - Diversify regional water portfolios
 - Improve water quality
 - Improve operational efficiency and transfers
 - Practice resource stewardship
 - Reduce water demand
 - Increase water supply
- **Initiative 2 - Maintain and Improve Statewide Water Management Systems:**
 - Maintain aging facilities
 - Implement the CALFED program
 - Improve flood management
 - Sustain the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

C. Association of California Water Agencies – “No Time to Waste: A Blueprint for California Water” - Finally the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) has worked with their membership to create “*No Time to Waste: A Blueprint for California Water*,” which was released in May, 2005. ACWA is a statewide, non-profit association whose 440 public agency members are responsible for about 90% of the water deliveries in California. This highly-regarded plan includes the following recommendations to ensure adequate water resources for all of California:

1. Improve the existing Delta water conveyance system to increase flexibility and enhance water supply, water quality, levee stability and environmental protection in the near term.
2. Evaluate long-term threats to the Delta levee and conveyance system and pursue actions to reduce risks to the state’s water supply and the environment.
3. Ensure delivery of adequate Colorado River supplies for Southern California and defend California’s rights on the Colorado River.
4. Implement and fund the Sacramento Valley Water Management Program.
5. Develop additional groundwater and surface water storage, including proposed surface storage projects now under study if they are determined to be feasible.
6. Support and fund local efforts to expand recycle water use and implement best management practices for urban and agricultural water use efficiency.

7. Improve the quality of California's drinking water supplies to safeguard public health and enhance water quality for agriculture and the environment.
8. Work with local agencies to overcome constraints to developing seawater and brackish groundwater desalination
9. Modernize the federal Endangered Species Act and other laws and regulations to allow water infrastructure projects, water supply and water quality activities to proceed while protecting species and habitats.
10. Expedite the approval process for voluntary water transfers.
11. Clarify and expand the state's role in flood control and promote multi-benefit flood control projects.
12. Support integrated regional water management plans.

The ACWA Blueprint also specifically makes the following recommendations for the San Joaquin Valley:

“The San Joaquin Valley, home of three of the top agricultural producing counties in the nation, is one of the fastest growing areas of the state but faces water quality and drainage problems, serious groundwater overdraft, and unreliable surface water availability. Additionally, the communities along the San Joaquin River below Friant Dam and the south Delta confront challenges of impaired water quality, including low oxygen levels, as well as inability to capture flows in the river which have already been dedicated to outflow requirements. Potential court-mandated changes to operation of Friant Dam could add significant new challenges both in maintaining adequate surface storage and addressing groundwater overdraft.”

“ACWA recommends that state and federal agencies help the San Joaquin Valley by developing additional surface and groundwater storage, including potential storage on the upper portion of the San Joaquin River, and by implementing the Delta Improvements Package. We also recommend that the agencies provide financial assistance to develop local and regional conjunctive use programs and expedite the water transfer process. Additionally, small towns throughout the San Joaquin valley are badly in need of technical and financial assistance to upgrade treatment systems to meet new drinking water standards.”

III. The San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan – Organization and Stakeholders

The effort to create the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan has been organized into four work groups. Collectively, the groups will create a strategy that can be used as a guideline for water use to create sustainability, support population growth and protect and enhance our environment. These groups are organized by four water-related needs within the region:

- Water supply
- Water quality
- Flood control
- Environmental enhancement

Although the composition of the work groups has not been finalized yet, it is envisioned that each will be comprised of individuals from throughout the region with relevant expertise and interests. Specifically, the following stakeholders will be represented in the work groups: members of the water community, representatives of industries and communities relying on water, and organizations dedicated to the enhancement of the environment. Work groups will include irrigation district managers, water agency members, water resource engineers, government officials, agribusiness representatives, public works managers, and environmentalists.

Two representatives from each of the region's congressional districts will be asked to participate in each of the work groups. A chairperson will be designated to coordinate meeting agendas, conduct the meetings and report on work group progress.

IV. Scope of Work for the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan: Development of a Water Master Plan and Business Plan

The first task of the work groups is an audit of existing needs, water projects, and institutional barriers. All relevant state, federal and local agencies, entities and individuals will be surveyed to solicit the following information, which will be cataloged and organized into a database:

- Water-related needs within the region to include:
 - Water supply
 - Water quality
 - Flood control, and
 - Environmental enhancement
- Known projects or opportunities for meeting these water-related needs that could benefit from state and/or federal funding; and
- Legal and institutional policy barriers that serve to obstruct meeting regional water-related needs.

The work groups will be tasked with:

- Preparing the survey questionnaire for their respective water-related issues;
- Developing a list of the state, federal and local agencies, entities and individuals to whom the surveys need to be sent and encouraging responses to the survey;
- Reviewing returned surveys for completeness and appropriateness (with follow up to respondents as necessary);
- Preparing and outlining a brief report, which will be used to summarize the data collected, illuminating or highlighting areas of particular interest and the suggested analysis of the data so as to best serve the effort's objectives; and
- Provide review and comment of the summary report.

The California Water Institute at California State University, Fresno has been asked to facilitate the efforts of the work groups, including coordinating meetings, administering the surveys, developing the database, and preparing final reports.

V. San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan: Status

A kick-off meeting and first meeting of the workgroups is tentatively scheduled for early September 2005.

The audit of existing needs, existing projects and institutional barriers is scheduled to be completed by February 2006. Once the audit is finished, the next step will be to develop the “water master plan,” which could be completed within the time frame of the California Partnership (i.e. final action proposal to be submitted by October 31, 2006).

The congressional delegation is already pursuing federal funds to support the effort to create the regional water plan.

VI. Connecting the California Partnership and the SJV Regional Water Plan Efforts

“Water Quality, Supply and Reliability” has been identified as a priority area to be addressed by the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. As the Partnership initiates its Water Work Group, the most immediate task is to consider the effort already underway to develop the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan and determine the extent to which the goals and objectives for the respective groups are in alignment. The congressional and program leaders of the regional water plan have expressed significant interest in joining forces with the California Partnership to leverage efforts and benefit the region. Assuming there is interest in joining efforts, communication and coordination issues would simply need to be addressed.